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THE UNIVERSITY AND THE PEOPLE.

(Address delivered by Principal Gordon at the Empire Club, Toronto, March 17th, 1904.)

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OTHERS have spoken at your weekly gatherings upon political, commercial, historical and economic questions. I may be permitted to take up a phase of higher education, and to speak of the relations of the universities to the people.

We are often asked to think imperially. Even from an imperial point of view my subject is one of great importance, for, after all, the strength of a nation depends upon the intellectual and moral qualities of its citizens, and the greatest service we can render the Empire is by the development of the higher types of men and women. Given the right kind of people, and all will come right in our political, social and commercial relations, and the purpose of the universities is to aid in improving the fountains of our national life, by training those who may be qualified to mould public thought and action. The test of the universities to-day is the service they can render to the nation, and this service is to be rendered not merely by educating a chosen few, from whom wisdom may percolate downwards throughout the mass, but by reaching as many as possible of the individuals who compose the mass, and thus making their influence felt among all classes.

Our Canadian universities have been modelled chiefly upon those of the mother country, but in Britain you have two very different types of university, the English and the Scottish, both of which have affected our educational ideas in Canada. The contrast between these may not be so marked now as formerly, especially as a number of new universities have of late been established in England, but until comparatively recent years when one spoke of the English University it was to the Oxford or Cambridge type that he referred. There, for the most part, the advantages of higher education were confined to the privileged few. The students were drawn very largely from the landed, the titled, and the richer classes. The university was in league with the aristocracy rather than with the great body of the people. It might train those who were to teach and govern their fellows, but only in this remote and indirect way was it meant for the nation at large. Provision was made by which some were admitted simply on the score of talent or attainment, for there were scholarships available under certain conditions for young men of exceptional ability, but the education offered was, as a rule, for the sons of the privileged classes.

It was far otherwise in the Scottish universities. There the students were freely drawn from that great repository, the mass of the people. Partly as the effect and partly as the cause of the democratic spirit of the Scottish people, their universities aimed at placing higher education within the reach of all, and thus earned in the truest way the title of national, by meeting the needs of the nation at large. As Ian

Maclaren says, "The path was well trodden from the farmhouse to the university." Thus there was fostered in Scotland a keen appetite for the benefits which the university confers. Many of her sons who were strangers to wealth and ease acquired an academic training through resolute and unsparing effort. By their toil to secure a college education, they won the power for higher toil, and developed the fibre of their will and character as well as of their mental faculties. And so it came about that while the English universities might have men of higher scholarship, those of Scotland were far more fully serving the nation, moulding into excellence materials from all classes and keeping in touch with all, helping to place that little people in the very front rank of educated nations, enabling them to contribute very largely in proportion to their numbers to the growing thought, the enlightenment and progress of the world.

In Canada we have been influenced by both of these types, but for the most part the Scottish type has prevailed. University education has rightly come to be regarded by us not as the exclusive property of the well-to-do, a preserve for the children of privilege, but as an advantage that should be open as far as possible to all who have brains and energy to avail themselves of it.

We are a democracy. We think that no man among us should be doomed to an inferior place by reason of birth, but that if he be gifted with superior talents the way should be open for him to make the best of himself for the benefit of the whole community. We want to make the most of ourselves, as a people, to make the best of the youth of our country, on whom its future depends, to develop their intelligence, their love of truth and righteousness, their power of forming wise judgments and correct opinions. We want them to have increasing capacity for handling the resources of the country, for dealing with the problems of commercial, social and political life, while at the same time they should be as familiar as may be with the best thoughts of the best thinkers, and have their life enriched with the ripest fruits of the generations that have gone before us. We want them to be fitted in the fullest degree for citizenship in this country, which, more than any other country, is opening out with amplest and most attractive opportunity.

Now, many influences may contribute to this training for citizenship. In addition to the public schools, to which the formal education of the majority must be confined, there are facilities for self-training always open to the earnest. There are libraries and reading rooms, and the vast and varied information of the daily and weekly press. There are magazines and books, at so moderate a price as to be within reach of the humblest purse. There is the invaluable experience of one's daily work, bringing him in contact with men, from each of whom something may be learned; and a familiar adage reminds us that experience is the best teacher, although it may be added that her fees are sometimes very high. There is, for those who can afford it, the training school of travel, peculiarly helpful to him who keeps a watchful eye and open ear; and even the poorest and most untraveled may, if he have suffi-

cient force of mind and character, cultivate his powers of observation and reflection in any lot so as to be happy in his own life and helpful to his neighbors.

These are some of the influences by which many of our best citizens have been trained, or rather, which they have employed in training themselves. And there are some who think that these are more effective as a training for citizenship than the universities. To them the university seems too remote from the life of the people to be an important factor in shaping public opinion or public action. They have been accustomed to look on it as a training school for certain professions, a preserve for the more advanced teacher, the lawyer, the doctor, the clergyman, and any others who might be so misguided as to waste part of youth's golden years in some of the studies through which those professionals must pass. If that narrow view was ever correct, it is not correct to-day. The idea and the ideal of a university is broader than it was when some of us were boys. It is not confined to training for certain professions. It has in view the man before the professional, and aims at raising the man with his talents, his working powers, all his capacities to a higher degree of efficiency.

When Ezra Cornell founded the university which bears his name, he wrote, "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." There is a breadth in that purpose which makes it practically impossible. Even in the best equipped university you cannot find instruction upon every subject. And yet it is the aim or ideal of the university to put a man at the point of view that has been reached along any line of inquiry by those who have gone before him. When a man takes up any subject—philosophy, literature, history, science—he finds that some have been already exploring that subject before him. Now, the university tries to place him at the point of view that has been reached by previous investigation. Of course the general university curriculum can do this only in regard to the great, broad lines of human inquiry, those that have been the subjects of most frequent investigation and with which it seems most important for us to be familiar. But by degrees these lines have been multiplied; the list of subjects has been increased; the university provides a guide for the inquirer along any one of many directions, and tries to let him see the point reached by the inquirers who have gone before him, and also tries to help him go forward as a pathfinder, detecting the trail that leads further on into realms of truth.

The university, however, does not restrict the student to one field of inquiry. On the contrary, it would try to prevent him from specializing too soon and to make him acquainted with at least the outlines of various fields of study. The true scholar should not only know some one subject pretty well, but he should be familiar enough with other subjects to see how his own is related to them. And so the university tries to help him see things in their true perspective, and place his own particular field in right relations to other fields, and

have a broad outlook, a wide horizon, like the sailor, who takes his bearings by sun and star as well as by lighthouse and headland.

Not only so, but by the course of study along which it leads him the university tries to develop the man. It cannot give him brains, but there is no other agency so likely to train him how to make the best use of his brains. I speak, of course, not of the idler, or of the misfit, who are found everywhere in life, but of the man with purpose and energy. The university helps to expand his powers of perception and of reflection, helps him to form habits of attention and application, helps him to sift opinions and to weigh evidence in the search for truth. It is not merely that he is acquiring knowledge; it is not even merely that he is sharpening his faculties, giving breadth and firmness to his mental grasp; but he is educating his character as well as his mind. If he is to be a successful student, then thoroughness must be the ruling quality in every study. He knows that when difficulties arise, they must be solved, not shirked. When proofs are offered to him he can accept them only if they are entirely valid. It is not easy and comfortable opinion, but truth with which he has to do, for the worship of truth is the very life of the university. Besides, he is forming habits of self-government, and of that proper self-respect which is but the due regard which a man should feel for the nature God has given him. There is an increasing tendency in our universities to lay upon the students the duty of maintaining discipline, and thus to train them for the full responsibilities of freedom. Young lads may matriculate who have not been much from home, nor have often had the burden of deciding for themselves. They have not yet learned how to use their liberty, and there is the danger that freedom may lead them into folly. They have not been steadied by a sense of responsibility, nor settled firmly upon the centre of gravity. In the university class-rooms and societies these young fellows come in contact with some who have a more adequate sense of the mission of the university, as well as of their own mission in life; they become trained into clearer and more balanced views; they find their place and recognize their opportunities, and form some worthy purpose which they already begin to realize.

There are some who object that the courses of study keep the university out of touch with the people, that they are impractical, unfitted for that large majority of men, who are not looking to professional life, and that many who pass through them lose rather than gain by them. This is an old and familiar objection to university education, and I cannot trespass upon your time to discuss it. But there is this to be noticed, that all the development of our universities for the past thirty years has been along the line of bringing them more closely in touch with popular needs, and of making them of more direct service to the nation. We might even say that the development of our universities has been along the line of usefulness as truly as the development of our railroad systems or of our agricultural implements.

Look at the subjects of study. The old-time course was largely confined to classics, philosophy, and pure science, that is, mathematics and what in Scotland was called natural philosophy. Some of us are old-fashioned enough to believe that those three lines of study were peculiarly fitted to develop a man for mental work in any field, and to give him an all-round training. But, be our estimate of these what it may, the more recent development of university studies has been along the line of subjects more attractive to that eminently practical person, the man in the street.

Thus, for instance, we have much more attention given now than formerly to our own English language and literature. It has been often pointed out, as by Macaulay and others, that the ancient classics have not by any means the same relative value now that they had when the curriculum in British universities was framed. Our own incomparable English literature has come into existence, enriched by translations from all languages as well as by the products of our own race. It may still be well even for the knowledge of English to study ancient languages, but life is short and the vast majority will be content with the treasures preserved in their own tongue. And the study of our literature is being made still more helpful in an increasing number of our leading universities by having connected with it the study of our English Bible. No department of inquiry should be of more effective service to our people than that which brings to bear upon them through the influence of devoted students the moral and spiritual uplift of our sacred scriptures.

With our own language and literature there has been introduced into all our universities the study of modern languages, especially French and German, the value of which may perhaps be not so apparent to the Greek-minded man, but which at least, I assume, no one here present will dispute. It would be well indeed, in view of the large proportion of our countrymen who speak the French tongue, if an increasing number of those of us who have sprung from other stock were able to use that language with ease and accuracy. We must, at least, recognize its claims, and acknowledge the wealth and beauty of literature to which it introduces us. Nor can we do without German if we would be familiar with much of the best literature, especially of the scientific works and reports of our day.

History is another of the studies recognized among our present requirements; and there are few more important, not merely for giving us a due appreciation of the past but for training us in forming just and charitable judgments of our fellowmen. To measure human conduct correctly, to trace the springs of action, to estimate motives, to form accurate opinions about others, is one of the most difficult tasks that we can undertake, and yet each of us must attempt it every day. Few lines of study are more helpful than history in correcting the narrow conclusions of our individual experience, and in leading us at least to try faithfully to be just and

true in forming our opinions of our fellow-men.

Political economy is even more recent than history in obtaining recognition in the universities, but it has already received a prominent place. Questions of commerce and finance, of government and administration demand for their solution the attention of experts. It is not enough that the people should take their views upon these subjects from the newspapers, however, wise and well-informed the press may be. Even editors are not omniscient, and may often be helped by specialists. How much more those of us who, along every line of reading feel hampered with ignorance. Whatever our views of tariffs and trusts, we are at one in wishing to have the correct view, to know the true and proper line that government and people should follow in dealing with such matters.

To the subjects I have mentioned there have been added, among those on which instruction is now offered in our universities, the circle of physical sciences. The world around us, as well as the world within, matter in all its forms and combinations as well as mind in all its activities and achievements, becomes the subject of our research, and we are enriched by the studies necessary for the chemist, the miner, the engineer, and others, who harness for us the forces of nature, and help to fulfil the primal commission that man should have dominion over the earth. These are departments that appeal at once to all as being of practical value to the people. All can recognize the importance of any line of inquiry that results, for instance, in cheaper ways of making steel, in giving us increased facilities for travel, in multiplying our manufacturers, and in placing us a little ahead of our competitors. Yet these results would not be had if there were not men devoted to science purely and simply for its own sake, men who have no schemes for getting rich quickly, but whose one object is to get at the facts of nature.

If, then, you ask me what are the universities doing for the people, I might point to the extended and varied courses of instruction now generally adopted, to the nearer approach they are making towards Ezra Cornell's ideal of an institution where any person can find instruction in any study, to their expansion along lines that bring them directly into touch with the felt wants of the community. But, in addition to these, there are other services not less but rather more important.

The universities are of service in helping to educate and elevate public opinion, by contributing a more highly educated element to the community. It is not merely that they train men for certain professions as they have always done, but through the increasing number of their graduates, who are to be found in many walks of life, they render large assistance in forming the opinion and action of the community. We are a democracy. We believe in, and we possess, government by the people, but government by the people needs to have educated men among the people more than any other form of government. In an absolute monarchy where the people have no controlling voice in national

affairs, government may be wisely administered even although the people themselves be sunk in ignorance. But it cannot possibly be so with us. Nothing can be done for us in the way of government except what we do for ourselves. When questions of public interest are discussed, it is, in the long run, the educated opinion that prevails, if the educated men will only exert themselves to make their influence felt. When the battle of confederation was being fought in Nova Scotia, one of the leaders opposed to it, the Hon. Woodbury McLellan, was asked what were the prospects. "We shall win," he said, " this time, but confederation will carry in the long run." Being asked why he thought so, he replied that in Halifax Archbishop Connolly and G. M. Grant were speaking in favour of it, and he found that when men of ideas, who had no selfish interest to serve, took up a cause, it was pretty sure to triumph in the end.

Not only do the universities help to educate public opinion and to shape the decisions and demands of the people, but they help the community to cherish the higher ideals and standards of life. The university stands for what is lofty in thought, for the pursuit of wisdom and the love of truth as ends in themselves and not as mere means for amassing wealth. We are entering on a period of industrial and material development. This is, as we are often told, our growing time, and the prospect is that our commercial progress will be more rapid than anything we have yet attained or even dreamed of. But there is danger in rapid progress, for when the speed is great, then, in the moral as in the physical world, it may be more difficult to keep one's balance and more disastrous to lose it. We need all the influences that can help us to maintain correct ideas and ideals of national life, and to remember that for neither man nor nation does life consist in the abundance of what we possess. It is part ot the duty and privilege of universities to keep the heart of the people true to lofty purposes, as well as to strengthen them in faculty for the achievement of such purposes. In this high endeavour there should be the closest union of all university men, for there should be no envy nor jealousy in the fair sisterhood of universities. Ours is a country that may well call forth the most loyal enthusiasm and the most fervent hopes of her sons, and there is laid upon our universities in a special degree the duty of striving so to influence the people that Canada shall stand as our great mother Britain so long has stood, for helpful and successful effort toward the progress and enlightenment of the world.